

★ ★ *Achieving a* ★ ★
Post-9/11 GI Bill for Our New
GREATEST GENERATION



Office of Senator Jim Webb
August 3, 2009



January 2007-June 2008

"More than two and half years ago, we began with the simple concept that those who have been serving since 9/11 should have the same opportunity for a first class educational future as those who served during World War II. This bill provides a modern and fair educational benefit to address the needs of those who answered the call of duty to our country--those who moved toward the sound of the guns--often at great sacrifice."

– Jim Webb

TIMELINE: The Fight For The New Post-9/11 GI Bill

January 4, 2007: Senator Jim Webb introduces "The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act" (S.22) on his first day in office.

January 25, 2007: Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and a number of Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) endorse the legislation.

May 9, 2007: Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing on S.22; Senator Webb and VSO's (VFW, PVA, DAV, MOAA, VVA, and American Legion) argue strongly for passage. Bush Administration and key Republican senators strongly oppose the legislation, maintaining that it will affect military retention, be too difficult to implement, and will be too costly.

June 14, 2007: Legislation receives bicameral support with introduction by Congressman Bobby Scott in the House of Representatives.

November 9, 2007: New York Times publishes op-ed by Senators Jim Webb and Chuck Hagel entitled: "A Post-Iraq G.I. Bill."

November 11, 2007: Washington Post editorializes in support of S.22, "Reward for Service: Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan deserve an improved GI bill."

February 6, 2008: Webb presses Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, on need for new GI Bill, during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the Defense Department's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request.

February 12, 2008: Webb, Lautenberg, and Hagel join nation's leading VSOs as they unveil their Independent Budget to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, advocating a "21st Century GI Bill." Marks the first time in twenty-two years of presenting an Independent Budget to Congress that the participating organizations have advocated a new, comprehensive GI Bill.

February 28, 2008: Webb, Hagel, Lautenberg reintroduce Post-9/11 GI Bill with Senator John Warner as key co-sponsor. These key cosponsors include two World War II veterans, two Vietnam veterans; two Democrats and two Republicans.

April 29, 2008: Webb, Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Akaka, Senate and House leadership, and bi-partisan, bi-cameral group of cosponsors hold rally with hundreds of student veterans on steps of U.S. Capitol in support of Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Bill enjoys strong bipartisan support with 58 cosponsors in the Senate and 295 in House.

June 19, 2008: House of Representatives passes Post-9/11 GI Bill with a vote of 416-12.

June 26, 2008: United States Senate passes the Post-9/11 GI Bill with a vote of 92-6.

June 30, 2008: Post-9/11 GI Bill signed into law.

The Washington Post

What the GIs Deserve

Virginia's Sen. Webb secures an updated college benefits plan for veterans.

Sunday, June 29, 2008

POLITICAL PROMISES are easy to make, harder to keep. So it is a testament to the tenacity of Sen. James Webb (D-Va.) and the justice of his cause that Congress has enacted a new GI Bill for war veterans. The freshman senator's ability to work across party lines means that the men and women who risk their lives for America's well-being will, in return, get expanded education benefits, along with opportunities for better futures.

The expansion of education benefits for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans is part of the \$257.5 billion emergency spending bill that passed the Senate on Thursday. The House gave its approval earlier, and President Bush is expected to sign it this week. The timing is fitting, considering that 64 years ago last Sunday, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law the original GI Bill, which made a college education affordable for millions of World War II veterans. Today's warriors are equally deserving, but the system, designed for a peacetime military, has not kept pace with the costs of college. Mr. Webb's bill -- The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act -- is true to the original in providing full tuition, housing and living costs.

The price tag of the program is not cheap -- an estimated \$62 billion over 10 years. While

Mr. Webb is right that taking care of veterans must be considered a cost of war, it's irresponsible that Congress and the White House refused to come up with money to pay for it. To get Republican support for the measure, House leaders agreed to drop what would have been a perfectly reasonable tax on affluent Americans. So the country is left with yet another unfunded entitlement program. A modification of the bill to allow some educational benefits to be transferred to immediate family members was a sensible solution to administration concerns about the bill's impact on service retention, but it, too, added to the unfunded costs.

The measure was a mere glint in the eye when Mr. Webb introduced it on his first day in office 18 months ago. It wasn't given much of a chance of advancing. Enlisting Republicans and fellow veterans such as Sens. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and John W. Warner (R-Va.) was important. In the end, Mr. Webb had lined up 58 co-sponsors in the Senate and 302 in the House. Also key was gaining the solid support of all the major veterans groups. No doubt Mr. Webb's background as former Navy secretary helped in dealing with Pentagon concerns. But what served him best was his justifiable outrage at how a generation of veterans was being short-changed.

WEBB GI BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

June 30, 2008

On Monday, June 30, President Bush signed into law landmark legislation introduced by Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) to provide post-9/11 veterans with comprehensive educational benefits. Last week, the legislation was overwhelmingly passed by both the House of Representatives and Senate.

Senator Jim Webb introduced this bill eighteen months ago on his first day in office. The bipartisan measure-- principally cosponsored by Sens. Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), and John Warner (R-VA), has unprecedented support from all major veterans' organizations, in addition to strong bipartisan support in Congress, with a House vote of 416 to 12, and a Senate vote of 92 to 6.

The following is a statement from Senator Webb:

"This is a great day for our veterans. This bill properly provides a modern and fair educational benefit to address the needs of those who answered the call of duty to our country--those who moved toward the sound of the guns--often at great sacrifice.

"Eighteen months ago, we began with the simple concept that those who have been serving since 9/11 should have the same opportunity for a first class educational future as those who served during World War II. Today, we have accomplished that goal.

"I would like to emphasize that this is not simply an expansion of veterans' educational benefits. This is a new program, a deserved program. It has now been nearly seven years since 9/11 -- seven years since those who have been serving in our military began earning the right for a proper wartime GI Bill.

"We have delivered this new, robust GI Bill with a great deal of collaboration and cooperation among members of the Senate, members of the House, and with the guidance and support of all of our nation's leading veterans' groups.

"It also gives me confidence and renewed hope that the Congress can begin working more effectively across party lines to do the work of the people."